

The

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Dean Smith Award honors best of college hoops

College basketball is a wonderful sport with a lot of warts, and there are times when the blemishes overwhelm the beauty of the game.

We currently are in one of those troubled times. Jim Boheim will sit out nine Atlantic Coast Conference games in 2015-16, partial penance for years of violations within his Syracuse program. Larry Brown was recently hit with his own nine-game suspension, and SMU is prohibited from playing in the postseason. Rick Pitino's Louisville program is being buffeted by tawdry allegations of a staffer

paying for players and recruits to have sex with escorts in an on-campus dorm. Roy Williams still is laboring through an NCAA investigation at North Carolina, too.

And those guys are all Hall of Famers.

Given the current climate, the USBWA's Dean Smith Award has come into being none too soon. This is a good time to remind everyone that nobility is attainable in college basketball.

The award is the brainchild of longtime USBWA member John Feinstein, who suggested it at the 2015 Final Four. It was met with enthusiastic response from the board and others within the organization. Equally impor-

Pat Forde
Yahoo Sports
President



tant was the embrace the idea has received from North Carolina, the school where Smith did his brilliant work.

Creating an award out of thin air is more work than I had imagined – it's been a learning experience pulling this together. Joe Mitch has, as always, been a resolute point man for the USBWA in this project. Steve Kirschner of UNC has shouldered a huge load on his campus and been the MVP of many planning calls. Feinstein and Dana O'Neil have supplied lots of legwork and brainpower to the project.

And thus we are arriving at a landmark occasion on Nov. 10 in Chapel Hill: the first Dean Smith Award will

be presented to former Georgetown coach John Thompson.

Big John was an easy choice because he epitomizes what we want the award to stand for: courage, conviction, conscience and activism beyond basketball. Dean Smith was so much more than a basketball coach, and Thompson has been as well. Before coaches lost their civic voices and retreated to the safe harbor of saying nothing, they dared to be heard. Both stood for something, often in the face of opposition.

The cynical will point out that North Carolina's academic scandal – the subject of the aforementioned NCAA investigation – has its roots in the latter years of Smith's tenure at the school. I'd argue that the timing is mere coincidence, not an indication that Smith aided and abetted the flim-flammy. If there is a coach who cared more about his players' education than Smith, well, we'd all be lucky to meet that person.

As president of the USBWA, I hope the entire membership takes pride in being the creators and curators of the Dean Smith Award. In a sport that sometimes sabotages itself, it is a reminder of how good college basketball can be.

Taking back Mountain West all-conference teams

If it's true the single biggest problem in communication is the illusion that it has taken place, things appear much clearer now between those running the Mountain West and the media members that cover men's basketball within it.

Case in point: All-league selections.

Controversy found the league last season, when 11 head coaches eliminated – for the first time in 12 years – the media from voting on post-season awards.

"I wouldn't say it was very contentious, because we weren't even told about it until the very end and only after I asked about it," said Geoff Grammer, who covers New Mexico for the *Albuquerque Journal*. "We were made aware of the switch at the last minute. I believe things will be better this year and both teams will be publicized by the conference. Some conference teams chose not to publicize our selections last season. Hopefully, that will change this time."

I have nothing against multiple all-conference teams from the same league, for allowing players to be recognized by as many groups as possible for a job well done on the court over a season. It's a big deal to the kid and his family and his team.

But how it reached the point of Mountain West players being honored by both coaches and media last season depicted a larger issue within the framework of how some all-league teams are formed: It pointed directly to

Ed Graney
Las Vegas Review-Journal
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coaches who want things both ways.

It pointed directly to their hypocrisy.

Coaches often whine most about the need for transparency in all things, but only when it fits their specific agenda. They are scared to death to let anyone know which of their players they nominate for awards and for which across the conference they cast votes.

Mountain West writers make their ballots public. They put their names and choices out there for all to see.

The coaches, who aren't allowed to vote for their own players, refuse. Often, they believe voting for an obvious leading candidate might damage their player's chances at an individual award, so they cast support for a third and undeserving kid.

Coaches are an unambiguous lot.

There is no mystery to them.

"Where last year, the media did their poll secretly and released it on Sunday (before the conference tournament), we want them back involved this year," said Javan Hedlund, associate commissioner in charge of communications for the conference. "We will still release our team on Tuesday, but if they want to be first and come out with their all-conference team and awards on Sunday again, we will have it on our web site and publicize it through social media and it will be listed in our record books along with the other all-conference teams. All of that is perfectly fine with us. We will promote it as the team selected by the media in the same manner we do for the one chosen by our coaches."

"We always monitor how our coaches vote on these things. If we see something that appears to be a coach trying to game the system in favor of his players, we make his school aware of it and there are discussions in the future about it. If we see anyone deliberately trying to be a homer for his team, we will and have addressed it."

So there will again be separate all-conference men's teams in the Mountain West this season, and that's not a bad thing. The more recognition for kids, the better.

It also appears that a little communication between the media and conference office has gone a long way.

Nothing wrong with that, either.

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There's no better time to be a USBWA member

There's never been a better time to join the USBWA than now.

The association continues to grow each year, with membership expected to surpass last year's total of 900 members and new benefits extended to those who join. Go online at usbwa.com to join or renew your membership. Annual dues are \$50 and \$25 for students and retirees.

The USBWA is open to all print and online media, broadcast journalists and publicists for college basketball and provides the membership a voice in media policy nationwide. The USBWA has a close association with the NCAA and through the years has helped shape some policies for writers covering the NCAA Tournament.

That was never more apparent than this past year's NCAA tournament. On behalf of the NCAA, USBWA webmaster Ted Gangi sent out surveys to members of the media who covered various rounds of the men's NCAA Division I tournament, including the Final Four.

There were 1,501 responses received from 5,668 invitations for an overall response rate of 26.5 percent. The response rate for the Final Four was even higher at 32.5 percent. In many cases, media members were asked to fill out more than one survey, as teams they covered advanced.

"The surveys conducted by the USBWA were a tremendous resource for us," said David Worlock, director of media coordination and statistics, marketing and broadcast alliances for the NCAA. "We've done our own surveys in the past, but the response rate this year was better than we typically see."

"We heard terrific compliments and constructive feedback and those comments gave us much to consider."

Worlock said a couple of Final Four schedule changes were a direct result of the surveys.

"Rather than making one player from each of the teams available for a Thursday press conference, we are going to have an open locker room for all four teams so that all student-athletes are available."

"We'll also have each head coach conduct an individual press conference on Thursday, rather than the joint ones we've typically done in recent years."

Gangi said the seven years he surveyed the media at postseason bowl games for the FWAA helped with the

Joe Mitch
USBWA
Executive Director



NCAA survey. "We were given the opportunity to use our expertise to gain real insight and feedback from all media covering the tournament for the first time," he said. "I want to thank the media for their overwhelming cooperation."

MEMBER BENEFITS. USBWA members receive some tremendous benefits for being part of the USBWA family. Most noteworthy this year and a change from previous years is that all members will receive a 12-issue, online subscription to *Basketball Times*, thanks to editor and publisher John Akers. In the past, members received seven monthly issues of the *Times*.

While Tipoff is now being sent electronically to members, it is also available on the USBWA website at usbwa.com.

This year's membership directory should be arriving at your home or office in early November. You can also access the directory online at usbwa.com by using your passcode. The directory is a terrific resource for writers and sports information directors. In addition to members' names, the directory lists the names and contact information for every Division I basketball program in the country and the beat writers who cover them. As past president and USBWA Hall of Famer Alex Wolff once wrote, the directory alone is worth the cost of membership.

In addition, there are some terrific discounts for members from Hertz, Hilton and Brooks Brothers. Members get 20 percent off the best available rate at participating Hilton properties. Brooks Brothers provides a 15 percent savings on regular-price merchandise, and Hertz gives a 10 percent discount for car rentals.

SPONSORSHIP RENEWALS. The USBWA wishes to thank those sponsors who renewed their sponsorships with the USBWA this year. Returning as sponsors are ESPN, the Naismith Memorial Basketball Hall of Fame, USA Basketball and the National Association of Basketball Coaches.

Hall of Famer Denlinger dies of cancer

Former columnist Ken Denlinger, who worked for the *Washington Post* from 1965-2003 and was inducted into the USBWA Hall of Fame in 2011, died of esophageal cancer on Oct. 3. He was 73.

Tom Kensler retired after more than 38 years as a sports writer, most of the past 26 years with the *Denver Post*. Kensler covered Colorado and Colorado State among several other beats for the Post. He is a past USBWA board member and earned National Sportswriters and Sportscasters (NSSA) best-of-state honors for Texas, Oklahoma and Colorado.

Ron Morris retired after 16 years as a columnist for *The (Columbia, S.C.) State*. He previously worked at the

Durham Herald-Sun and the *Tallahassee Democrat*.

Roger Rubin was among several sports writers who lost their jobs in layoffs by the *New York Daily News*. Rubin, the St. John's beat writer, had spent the past two decades with the Daily News and has also worked for *Sports Illustrated* and *Newsday*.

Ben Frederickson, who covered Tennessee basketball for the Knoxville News Sentinel, accepted a position as an online reporter and columnist for the *St. Louis Post-Dispatch* and @stltoday.

Jesse Temple, who covered Wisconsin football and basketball for FoxSportsWisconsin.com, joined ESPN.com, where he will cover Wisconsin and Big Ten football.

Lodge Notes

USBWA creates Dean Smith Award to honor his spirit

The USBWA has created an award to pay tribute to one of college basketball's most revered coaches.

This past summer, the USBWA announced at a joint news conference with the University of North Carolina the creation of the Dean Smith Award to honor the late coaching legend and former Tar Heels basketball coach.

The Dean Smith Award will be presented annually by the USBWA to an individual in college basketball who embodies the spirit and values represented by Smith. Candidates for the award will include coaches and non-coaches, both male and female, from all divisions of the NCAA and NAIA.

"We are proud to honor the legacy of Coach Smith," said USBWA President Pat Forde of Yahoo Sports. "Dean Smith was not simply a coach who won, but a coach who educated outside the gymnasium, who demonstrated a concern for his players beyond their athletic ability, who had an active voice on social issues and was an agent for positive change. He was a great role model for his peers and for future generations. We are pleased to recognize those who have followed his path."

Smith passed away last February at the age of 83. He coached 36 seasons at North Carolina, winning two national championships and an Olympic gold medal and appearing in 11 Final Fours. He retired in 1997 with 879 victories, which at the time were the most by any basketball coach in Division I history.

Smith is remembered not only for his coaching success but his accomplishments off the court. He took a stand on a number of social and political issues during his career, even though they were often unpopular. He championed racial equality and joined in protests on campus against segregation. He helped integrate a restaurant and a neighborhood in Chapel Hill, and in 1966, he recruited the first African-American player to North Carolina, Charles Scott. Smith was opposed to the Vietnam War and the death penalty and spoke publicly in support of women's rights. He also recorded radio spots to promote a freeze on nuclear weapons.

In 2013, President Obama awarded Smith the nation's highest civilian award, the Presidential Medal of Freedom, for his "courage in helping to change our country."

Smith is also known for his loyalty to his players. He was deeply involved in their lives, both during and after college. Shortly after his death, it was announced that Smith's will included sending \$200 to every letterman who played for him at North Carolina, with the message, "Enjoy a dinner out compliments of Coach Dean Smith."

Smith coached 30 All-Americans at North Carolina, including perhaps the game's greatest player, Michael



John Thompson is award's first winner

The USBWA selected former Georgetown coach John Thompson as the first winner of the Dean Smith Award. Thompson will be presented the award at a dinner in Chapel Hill on Nov. 10.

Inducted into the Naismith Basketball Hall of Fame in 2006, Thompson retired in 1999 with a 26-year record at Georgetown of 596-239. His 1984 team won the NCAA championship, and he took the Hoyas to three Final Fours and 19 NCAA tournament appearances. He was one of Smith's closest friends in coaching, an un-official 'pupil,' of Coach Smith's dating to North Carolina's recruitment of one of Thompson's players while he was coaching at St. Anthony's High School in Washington, D.C.

"You are hitting me in my soft spot," Thompson said when informed he had been selected. "There was no one in basketball I loved or respected more than Dean Smith. There was never anyone like him."

Thompson's respect for Smith went way beyond wins and losses. And, it was Thompson's record away from the court rather than his wins and losses that earned him the award, which led to this recognition.

"We think John Thompson is the perfect choice as the first winner of the Smith award," said USBWA President Pat Forde. "We wanted the winner to be someone Dean Smith would be proud to present the award to if he was here to do it. We think, with John, we have that and we know we got someone who Coach Smith's family is thrilled to honor."

Thompson grew up in Washington, D.C., and played on an Archbishop Carroll High School team that won 48 games in a row during his junior and senior seasons. He was an All-American at Providence College and part of the school's 1963 NIT championship team. He then backed Bill Russell up at center on two

NBA championship teams in Boston before starting his coaching career in Washington at Archbishop Carroll.

When he was named the coach at Georgetown in 1972, the school president told him he would be thrilled if the Hoyas could "make the NIT every few years."

They did that – but threw in the 19 NCAA appearances, including 14 in a row at one stage – while Thompson recruited such stars as Patrick Ewing, Dikembe Mutombo and Alonzo Mourning, among others. Thompson was an assistant to Smith on the 1976 gold medal-winning U.S. Olympic team and was head Olympic coach in 1988.

More important – at least in the context of the Smith Award – almost all the players he recruited who stayed four years left with Georgetown degrees. Thompson became a leading spokesman on social and education issues and was the first African-American coach to take a team to the Final Four when Georgetown advanced to the national title game in 1982 against North Carolina.

It was at that Final Four that Thompson first made his voice heard on a national stage. Asked how he felt being the first African-American to coach a Final Four team, Thompson said: "I resent that question. I resent it because the implication is that I'm here because I'm somehow better than other great coaches who came before me who didn't have the same opportunities I've been given. I am not the first black coach capable of coaching a team to the Final Four by any means."

He lost the national championship game to Smith, a classic game decided by a Michael Jordan jump shot. Afterwards, Thompson said, "I wanted the pupil to show the teacher that he'd learned from him. I wanted the teacher to be proud of the pupil."

The teacher was proud then and no doubt he would be very proud today.

Jordan. "He was more than a coach," said Jordan in a statement following Smith's passing. "He was a mentor, my teacher, my second father."

"The Dean Smith Award is about recognizing individuals for things beyond winning basketball games," said *Washington Post* columnist and former USBWA president John Feinstein. "Coach Smith used his platform to take on tough issues that most people in sports shy away from. We want to honor those who have lived up to his ideals."

"The USBWA has a long history of supporting college basketball and honoring the men and women who make our game great," said North Carolina coach Roy Williams. "I am thrilled that the USBWA would honor Coach Smith's legacy with this award. "The award

is especially meaningful because the criteria to receive the award go beyond winning games. It recognizes the profound impact Coach Smith had on so many lives."

The USBWA plans to present the award annually prior to the start of the college basketball season in November. This year's award will be presented at a dinner on the UNC campus in Chapel Hill, with college basketball analyst Bill Raftery serving as emcee for the dinner.

Net proceeds from the dinner and reception beforehand will benefit the Dean E. Smith Opening Doors Fund, which assists students from low-income families to attend college and professionals in education and social work to pursue advanced degrees. Coach Smith championed the cause of access to higher education and opportunity for all, two fields close to his heart.

Nominations being taken for USBWA awards

Nominations are now being accepted for the following USBWA awards to be presented next April.

HALL OF FAME. Established in 1988, the USBWA honors past and current members for their contributions to the organization and for their achievements in sports journalism. To be eligible, an individual must have a minimum of 20 years experience as a sports writer or college athletics administrator dealing with basketball. Send nominations to USBWA Executive Director Joe Mitch at mitch@usbwa.com.

KATHA QUINN AND MARY JO HAVER-

BECK. Both awards recognize individuals in men's and women's basketball for their service to the media and for the inspiration they provide to those in the sports journalism profession. The awards are presented in honor of two former sports information directors who have passed away -- Quinn (St. John's) and Haverbeck (Penn State). Send nominations for the Quinn Award in men's basketball to past president Malcolm Moran at moranma@indiana.edu and to Mel Greenberg at poll@att.net for the Haverbeck Award in women's basketball

MOST COURAGEOUS. The USBWA presents a

male and female award, honoring a player, coach, official or administrator who demonstrates extraordinary courage while facing adversity in life. First presented in 1978, it is the USBWA's oldest award. Send men's nominations to David Teel, USBWA third vice president, at dteel@daily-press.com and women's nominations to Greenberg.

RISING STAR. The USBWA honors a member who is under 30 and shows outstanding promise as a journalist covering college basketball. Send nominations to John Akers, Tipoff editor, at johna19081@gmail.com.

Victoria Lyons wins USBWA scholarship

Victoria Lyons, a freshman at Johns Hopkins University, has been selected the winner of the U. S. Basketball Writers Association's college scholarship given annually to the son or daughter of a USBWA member.

Victoria is the daughter of USBWA member Terry Lyons of DigitalSportsDesk.com.

The scholarship is a \$1,000 grant awarded annually by the USBWA for four years.

"We had an exemplary collection of applicants," said USBWA President Pat Forde of Yahoo Sports. "Victoria stood out among the group and the USBWA is pleased to present her with its annual scholarship."

Lyons submitted an impressive application for the scholarship that demonstrated academic excellence and leadership in community service. She graduated from The Winsor School in Boston with a 3.8 grade point average. While in school, she served as the head of its tutoring program at the Mather Elementary School in Dorchester, Mass., to help students with reading and writing. She was photography

editor for her high school's online news magazine, a tour guide for the admissions office, a summer camp counselor teaching creative arts and a frequent volunteer at the Greater Boston Food Bank.

She also started a commemorative 9/11 program at Winsor after learning that the school did not commemorate the date Sept. 11 in our nation's history.

Victoria, who is known by her friends, classmates and family as "Tori," is studying history at Johns Hopkins. She has plans to take classes at Hopkins' Graduate School of Education in preparation for graduate school and her goal of being an elementary school teacher.

"It is not often that I use the words gentle, confident, intellectual, empathetic, courageous and powerful to describe the same person," wrote David Clarke, director of college counseling at The Winsor School. "But Tori is that kind of person."

"She is one of the most inquisitive intellectuals I have met at Winsor, and she is also one of the kindest human beings I have encountered in my twenty-year career. She is a gem."



Victoria Lyons

USBWA poll foreshadows tight races

Maryland and Providence's Kris Dunn held slight edges in the USBWA's annual preseason poll.

The Terrapins received eight of a possible 15 first-place votes from USBWA officers and board members.

Second-place North Carolina received four first-place votes and finished only 13 points behind the Terps. Third-place Kentucky received three first-place votes and finished 15 points behind.

Dunn earned four votes as the preseason favorite to win the most votes as preseason co-favorites to win the Oscar Robertson Trophy, given to the nation's top player.

Marcus Paige of North Carolina received three votes, and Buddy Hield of Oklahoma and Georges Niang of Iowa State both received two votes.

Four other players – Malcolm Brogdon of Virginia, Ben Simmons of LSU, Melo Trimble of Maryland and Kyle Wiltjer of Gonzaga – each received one vote.



Kris Dunn



Ben Simmons

Wisconsin.

Other teams receiving votes included: Baylor (37), Notre Dame (37), Louisville (30), Texas A&M (23), Cincinnati (22), West Virginia (18), NC State (14), Georgetown (13), Florida State (11), Syracuse (10), Xavier (10), Miami (8), Texas (3), Iowa (2), Boise State (1), Davidson (1) and UCLA (1).

Simmons received all but three votes for Wayman Tisdale Award, given to the nation's top freshman.

Others to receive votes were Skal Labissiere and Jamal Murray of Kentucky and Diamond Stone of Maryland.

The rest of the top 10 included, in order: Virginia, Kansas, Duke, Wichita State, Iowa State, Gonzaga and Villanova.

The rest of the top 20 included: Oklahoma, Arizona, Indiana, California, Michigan State, Utah, LSU, Purdue, Vanderbilt and SMU.

Rounding out the top 27 are Connecticut, Butler, Michigan, Oregon and

<i>Men's Preseason Top 25</i>		
1. Maryland (8)	360	
2. North Carolina (4)	347	
3. Kentucky (3)	345	
4. Virginia	333	
5. Kansas	316	
6. Duke	296	
7. Wichita State	249	
8. Iowa State	242	
9. Gonzaga	226	
10. Villanova	225	
11. Oklahoma	224	
12. Arizona	215	
13. Indiana	210	
14. California	190	
15. Michigan State	159	
16. Utah	96	
17. LSU	81	
18. Purdue	72	
19. (tie) Vanderbilt	69	
SMU	69	
21. Connecticut	59	
22. Butler	58	
23. Michigan	55	
24. Oregon	49	
25. Wisconsin	41	

UConn, Stewart figure to four-peat in women's hoops

Women's Preseason Top 25

1. Connecticut
2. South Carolina
3. Tennessee
4. Notre Dame
5. Ohio State
6. Baylor
7. Northwestern
8. Duke
9. Maryland
10. Florida State
11. Texas
12. Texas A&M
13. Louisville
14. George Washington
15. South Florida
16. Arizona State
17. Oklahoma
18. Stanford
19. Kentucky
20. North Carolina
21. Rutgers
22. Oregon State
23. Chattanooga
24. Villanova
25. Princeton

By MEL GREENBERG

Bankers Life Fieldhouse is an appropriate place for the Women's Final Four to be held in Indianapolis in April because the money team of the sport is expected to land there carrying away all the hardware again.

Furthermore to celebrate the Olympics year of 2016, the Division II and Division III title games will also be played there in a doubleheader.

Much of the early part of the season will be made of quarters – not the kind that jingle – but the new format in which the rest of women's basketball joins the WNBA in switching from halves to quarters.

As for that money team, that would be the squad that has headlined this preview in recent seasons at the University of Connecticut, which is targeting an unprecedented fourth straight title.

Though this prediction might seem to be getting old, at least there's a new angle each time out in Hall of Fame and women's Olympic coach Geno Auriemma having moved past the legendary former Tennessee coach Pat Summitt for the women's record with nine titles, then last season tying the Wizard of Westwood John Wooden at UCLA with the combined gender total of 10.

This time around, Auriemma looks to top Wooden along with the gaining the four-peat and, if achieved, the Huskies would tie UCLA in teams of total program championships at 11.

If there are any threats to UConn, they would be coming from Dawn Staley's South Carolina squad and Notre Dame's Muffet Mc-

Graw's Irish group and possibly from an oldie rival in the past in Tennessee, where Holly Warlick now has enough talent to possibly hook up with UConn for all the gems.

As for individual repeats, UConn's Breanna Stewart goes into the season as the prohibitive favorite to take player of the year honors again and, if anointed by the USBWA membership, she would be the first to pull a three-peat.

And if there is a challenge to be made it could come from her own teammate, considering that sophomore Kia Nurse, a niece of former NFL quarterback Donovan McNabb, led the Canadian National Squad over Stewart's USA bunch for the gold medal in the Pan American Games last summer.

Yes, to continue with our theme, the rich keep getting richer in the state of Connecticut.

Some other players to keep an eye on are USBWA reigning freshman of the year in Kelsey Mitchell at Ohio State, North Carolina transfer Diamond DeShields and sister redshirt Mercedes Russell at Tennessee, the South Carolina duo of Tiffany Mitchell and A'Ja Wilson, Notre Dame's Brianna Turner, Baylor's Nina Davis, and George Washington's Jonquel Jones, who all comprise just the tip of the iceberg in a season ahead loaded with talent in women's collegiate basketball.

That being said, here is a preseason Top 25 just to get USBWA women's activity underway in a season that will again offer weekly national and freshman awards.